

U.S. Court of Federal Claims



CM/ECF Update

January 2003

Case Management

CM / ECF

Electronic Case Files

Important Information

The U.S. Court of Federal Claims is scheduled to "Go Live" on the Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system on **March 17, 2003**. On the "Go Live" date, all existing Contract cases for Chief Judge Damich, Judge Allegra, and Judge Block in which DOD is the defendant will be converted into electronic cases. Also, electronic filing will be mandatory in all new Contract cases in which DOD is the defendant. Complaints must be filed at the court in the traditional paper manner. Attorneys will be notified when their case is an ECF case.

What are the Advantages to CM/ECF?

The benefits of CM/ECF are numerous:

- Access to electronic docket sheets
- Immediate access to filed documents
- Access to documents from anywhere with internet access
- Access to electronic documents 24/7
- Simultaneous access of documents
- Automatic electronic noticing of filings
- Less physical storage space needed for paper copies
- Reduced mail and courier costs

Electronic Access

A key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it provides unprecedented access to up-to-the-second docket sheets as well as to the documents themselves over the Internet through the Court's electronic filing web site.

Electronic Filing

Another key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it accepts documents filed electronically over the Internet. While it is not necessary that documents be filed electronically to have them entered into the CM/ECF system, electronic filing is strongly encouraged by the Court.

Electronic Noticing

A third key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it provides immediate e-mail notices to all counsel involved in a case whenever a document is filed. To receive electronic notice of filings, attorneys must be registered to file electronically and must have the e-mail noticing feature of their Court account turned on.

Training At The Court

The court has scheduled attorney training sessions on 1/31/03, 2/3/03, and 2/14/03 at the court. Future training sessions will be scheduled. Call 202-219-9942 for information about training.

Other Training Options

See the court's public website at <http://www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/cmecf.htm> for the following training options:

- 1. On-Line Computer Based Training (CBT)** - This on-line training module will walk you through the various screens to use CM/ECF.
- 2. User Guide for Attorneys** - This document has instructions for using CM/ECF at our court.
- 3. Attorney Event List** - This document lists all the docketing events that attorneys are

allowed to use at the court. You will need to be familiar with this document before using the system.

4. Training Database - The training database is a copy of our CM/ECF system. You will be able to log with a generic attorney account and start using the system for training purposes.

5. CM/ECF streaming video “CM/ECF - The Attorney’s Perspective” - This on-line video presents the benefits of CM/ECF and overview of the system.

Attorney Registration/Certification

Attorneys are required to register for CM/ECF accounts. Attorneys must be members of the bar to receive an account. Attorneys also need to pass an on-line certification test before the court issues a login ID and password. See the court’s public website for more information at <http://www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/cmecf.htm>.

New Court Rules for CM/ECF

The court has drafted a General Order to allow for electronic filing. This will be posted on the court’s public website when available at <http://www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/cmecf.htm>.

Are There Fees?

Electronic access to court data by the public is available through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) program. Attorneys and litigants receive one free copy of documents filed electronically in their cases; additional copies are available for viewing or downloading at seven cents per page. Directed by Congress to fund electronic access through user fees, the judiciary has set the fee at the lowest possible level sufficient to recoup program costs.

How Will I Sign Documents?

Documents must be signed with “s/” followed by the attorney name, for example “s/John Doe” or “s/Jane Doe”. This in combination with your login ID and password will constitute your signature.

Technical Requirements

Filers will need the following hardware and software to file documents in the CM/ECF electronic filing system:

- A personal computer running a standard platform such as Windows or Macintosh.
- A PDF-compatible word processor like Macintosh or Windows-based versions of WordPerfect or Word.
- Internet service.
- Netscape Navigator version 4.6 or 4.7. (Netscape 6 is not recommended for use with CM/ECF.) The new versions of the CM/ECF system have been certified to be compatible with Internet Explorer 5.5.
- Software to convert documents from a word processor format to portable document format (PDF). Adobe Acrobat PDF Writer is recommended. Acrobat Writer Version 3.X, 4.X and 5.0 adequately meet the CM/ECF filing requirements.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available for free, is needed for viewing PDF documents.
- A scanner may be necessary to create electronic images of documents that are not in your word processing system.

PDF Documents

CM/ECF only accepts PDF (portable document format) documents. Adobe Acrobat Reader is available free to view documents. Adobe Acrobat Writer is recommended to electronically create PDF documents. Attorneys cannot file PDF documents that are larger than 300k.

Scanning

Scanning should be avoided when possible. Scanned documents are significantly larger than electronically created documents. If you have to scan, set the scanner to “200dpi” and “black and white” image.